

PETUNIAS

Petunias are one of the hottest plants in the herbaceous annual market. Their popularity is ever increasing because of the release, promotion and commercial use of the 'Wave', 'Easy Wave' and 'Tidal Wave' series. The original 'Wave' petunia was 'Purple Wave', an All America Selection from 1996. 'Wave' petunias are available in six colors (purple, pink, rose, misty lilac, lavender and blue) and were the first of the seed-propagated spreading petunias. They reach 12-14 inches tall and spread 24-30 inches. 'Easy Wave' petunias are available in a few more colors (pink, blue, rosy dawn, salmon, white, red, shell pink and coral reef) than the 'Wave' types. These have better growth habits than the 'Waves' and generally bloom earlier. Hedgiflora petunias describe the 'Tidal Wave' types. Colors are hot pink, cherry, silver and purple. They reach 3 feet tall and 3 feet wide and tolerate slightly warmer temperatures than the other petunias. All of these petunias are outstanding and worthy of wide use.

QUICK FACTS AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

Common Name: Petunias
 Botanical Name: *Petunia x hybrida*
 Varieties/Cultivars to Look For: 'Wave', 'Easy Wave' and 'Tidal Wave'
 Color: numerous colors available
 Blooming Period: February - June
 Type: annual
 Size: 12-30 inches height; 2-3 foot spread
 Exposure: full to partial sun
 When to Plant: September - November and January - March
 How to Plant: 12 - 18 inches between individual plants; avoid planting too deep
 Soil: slightly acid; well-drained with organic matter
 Watering: couple times weekly to establish and once every 7-10 days thereafter when rainfall is lacking
 When to Prune: slightly pinch and deadhead after flowering for second bloom encouragement
 When to Fertilize: at planting with a slow-release fertilizer

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'Blue Wave'



'Misty Lilac Wave'



'Pink Wave'



'Lavender Wave'

EVERGREEN WISTERIA

Most Southerners are understandably leery of the Chinese Wisteria, but fortunately it has a much better-behaved cousin, also in the *Fabaceae* family – the Evergreen Wisteria (*Millettia reticulata*). This evergreen or semi-evergreen twining woody vine, formerly known as *Wisteria sempervirens*, sports beautiful 6-8-inch, deep purple-magenta cascading flower clusters called racemes. The bloom lasts from early summer to late fall, throughout Louisiana's heat and humidity! Vines will extend to 15 feet or more in length.

QUICK FACTS AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

Common Name: Evergreen Wisteria

Botanical Name: *Millettia reticulata*

Color: Leathery foliage is a rich deep green. Flowers are a brilliant deep violet color, appearing in terminal racemes from late spring through summer.

Type: Evergreen to semi-evergreen climbing vine.

Size: This plant can spread to a length of 15 feet or more.

Exposure: *Millettia* should be planted in sun to partial shade, but also benefits from some protection from cold winter winds.

When to Plant: Fall planting is preferred, but container-grown specimens can be planted almost any time of the year. Avoid planting during the heat stress of July and August.

Soil: A loose, moist, sandy, well-drained organic soil is great for this plant.

Watering: Evergreen wisteria can take some degree of drought, but will certainly benefit from timely watering to avoid moisture stress during extended dry periods.

When to Fertilize: A balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 can be applied in late winter or early spring and a soluble fertilizer can be used on a monthly basis throughout the summer to encourage blooming.

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With its evergreen pinnately-compound leathery leaves and fragrant, deep violet flowers in a showy raceme, *Millettia reticulata* contributes an abundance of positive aesthetic character to the home landscape.



Evergreen wisteria can safely be used where Chinese wisteria would become overgrown and difficult to maintain. Here it softens the hard lines of a deck rail while providing a beautiful floral display throughout the growing season.

Photos courtesy of Peter Gallagher.

February 2008